

E
241
B73H65

A
0
0
1
1
5
6
4
0
8
5



UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

Hooton

The Battle of Brandywine

California
Regional
Library Facility



THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

THE
BATTLE OF BRANDYWINE
WITH ITS
LINES OF BATTLE.



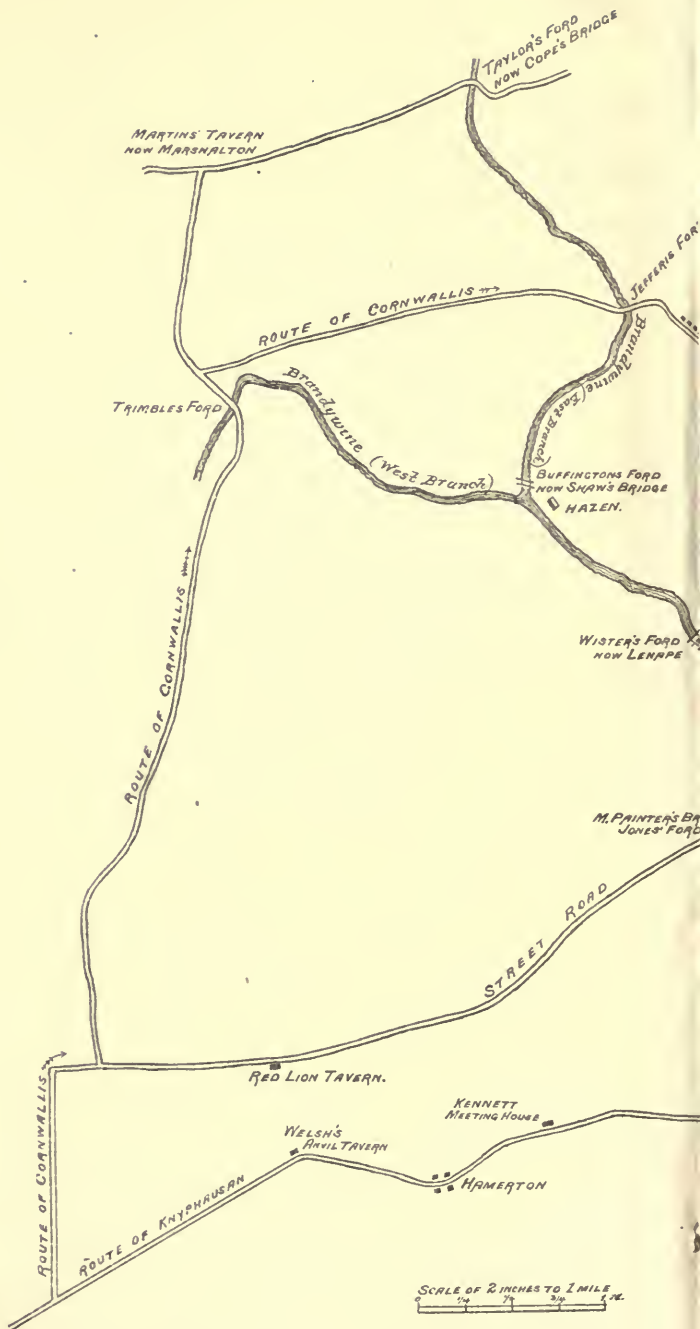
THE OLD FLAG'S BAPTISM OF FIRE, ETC.

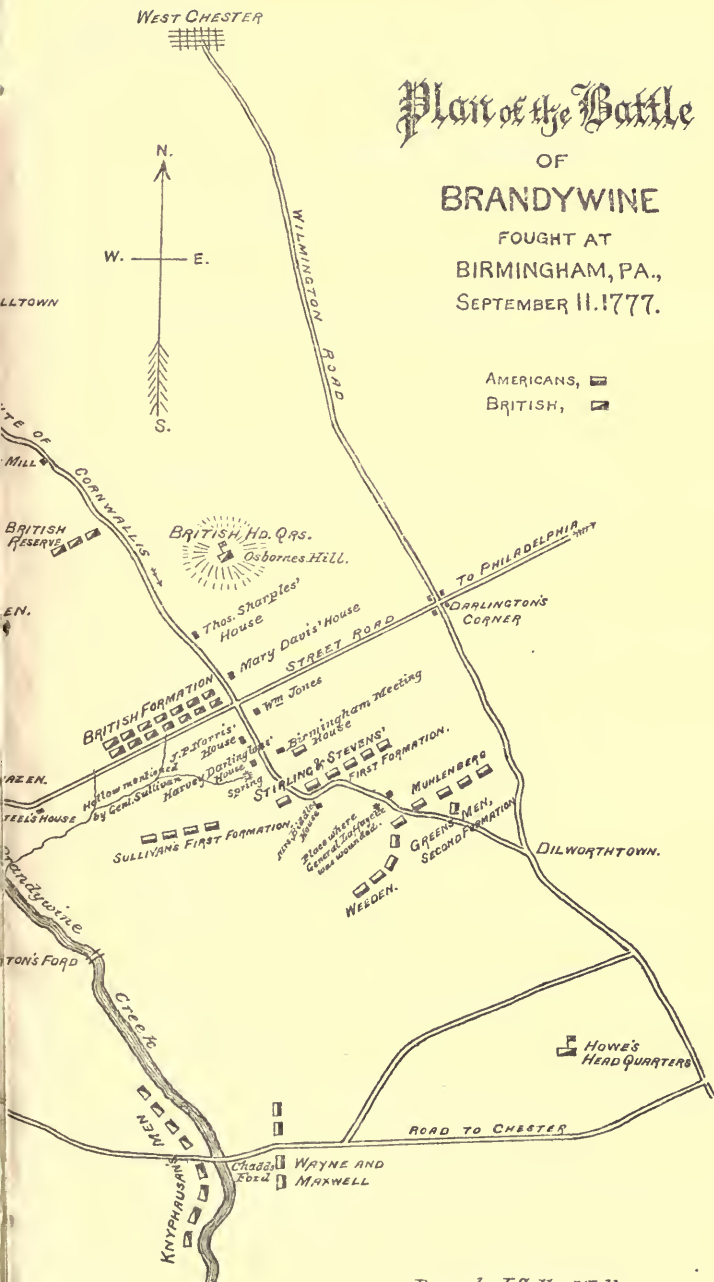
Ray

Col. F. C. Hooton and His Committee Make Report of
Their Researches to McCall Post, G. A. R., Concern-
ing Various Points of That Memorable Struggle.

HARRISBURG:
WM. STANLEY RAY, PRINTER.
1900.







Drawn by J. Sutton Wall.
August 1. 1900.

THE

E
241
873H76

Battle of Brandywine

With Its Lines of Battle.

COL. F. C. HOOTON AND HIS COMMITTEE MAKE REPORT OF THEIR RESEARCHES TO
McCALL POST, G. A. R., CONCERNING VARIOUS POINTS OF THAT MEMOR-
ABLE STRUGGLE.

THE OLD FLAG'S BAPTISM OF FIRE, ETC.

McCall Post, No. 31, G. A. R., West Chester, met Friday evening, June 30, A. D. 1900.

The Committee on the Baptism of the American Flag in battle, and matters of interest generally relating to the history of the Battle of Brandywine made its report, through its Chairman, Col. F. C. Hooton, which we publish below, in full, because of its general interest.

The Post also decided to erect a fine flag pole and fling to the breeze a beautiful flag at Sandy Hollow, on the farm of Henry Bennett, in commemoration of the heroic stand made there by General Greene's command, and the American dead who are buried there.

The pole will be erected there on September 11 next, and the Secretary of War has been asked for a cannon to be placed there.

Congressman Butler has been requested to look after this part of the matter.

To the Post Commander, officers and members of Gen. George A. McCall Post, No. 31, G. A. R., Department of Pennsylvania:

The committee appointed to investigate and report as to whether the tradition that the American flag, the stars and stripes, was first unfurled in battle at the Battle of Brandywine, fought September 11, A. D. 1777, is true or not, respectfully reports:

It appears that the necessity for a common flag occurred to Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Lynch, of South Carolina, and Benjamin Harrison, of Virginia, who visited Washington's camp at Cambridge, in October, 1775, as a committee from Congress, to consult with him as to the best method of continuing and supporting a regular continental army.

The result of their conference was the adoption of a flag which was partly the British flag with the thirteen red and white stripes added to it to represent the thirteen colonies.

This flag was carried into Boston when it was evacuated, at the defeat of our forces on Long Island, at the defence of Forts Washington and Lee, in the retreat through New Jersey and at the victories at Princeton and Trenton, but from its similarity to the British flag it was deemed advisable after the Declaration of Independence to abandon it.

Accordingly on Saturday, June 14, 1777, Congress resolved that the flag of the thirteen United States should be thirteen stripes, alternately, red and white, and the union should be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation.

This date is therefore the birthday of the American flag. This resolution was not published in the newspapers until August and was not officially promulgated under the signature of the Secretary of Congress at Philadelphia, until the 3d of September, eight days before the Battle of Brandywine, but it seems to be well authenticated that the stars and stripes except as to the number of the stars was first unfurled in the Battle of Brandywine, fought in what was then Chester county, Pennsylvania, but from the division of the county, is now partly in Chester county and partly in Delaware county, on September 11, A. D. 1777.

. In 1794 the States of Vermont and Kentucky having been ad-

mitted, the flag was by act of Congress changed and two stars and two stripes added, making fifteen stars and fifteen stripes.

This flag continued to be the national flag until 1818. It was under that flag we won our naval victories and our victories on land in the war of 1812.

In 1818 Congress passed an act by which we went back to the flag of the Revolution, with thirteen stripes, alternately red and white, with a blue field, in this field to be one star for every State in the Union.

We, therefore, carried in the war of the Rebellion the same flag our ancestors carried in the Revolution, first unfurled at Brandywine, except with the increase of the number of stars.

Every military post is provided with three flags: first, the garrison flag, which is twenty feet wide and thirty-six feet long; second, the post flag, which is ten feet wide and twenty feet long; third, the storm flag, which is four feet two inches wide and eight feet long.

Each regiment in the army has two flags known as the colors. One of the national flag, the other the regimental flag, both of silk.

Each of these flags except for the cavalry, is four feet six inches wide and five feet six inches long; the pike is nine feet in length.

The cavalry colors which are somewhat smaller are called standards and the pike somewhat longer.

The centre stripe of the flag has embroidered on it the name and number of the regiment. The regimental flag is scarlet, for the engineers and the artillery, blue for the infantry and yellow for the cavalry.

The regimental flag has on it the coat of arms of the United States, and the number or name of the regiment. In a volunteer regiment the coat of arms of the State it is from and the number and name of the regiment.

When we recall the number of engagements on sea and land in which our flag has been unfurled, we naturally experience a desire to know something about the history of its first engagement, whether the soldiers who carried it showed proper courage, whether they maintained their ground as you would hope they did and, in general, whether there was anything in the flags first battle to be ashamed of.

On August 25, 1777, the British army under the command of Sir William Howe with, as Capt. Montessor, Howe's chief engineer officer states, 18,000 men landed at Turkey Point on the Elk, in Cecil county, Maryland, on their expedition for the capture of Philadelphia, the Capitol of the colonies.

This army Howe immediately divided into two grand divisions, one of 11,000 men under Gen. Knyphausen, the other of 7,000 men under Lord Cornwallis.

These two divisions advanced by easy stages on the road towards Philadelphia, skirmishing daily with the Americans until the 10th of September, on the evening of which day both divisions reached Kennett Square. Here the British General learned that General Washington had made every preparation to dispute his further advance at the Brandywine, some seven miles distant.

He accordingly arranged his plan of attack. Washington's army consisting of about 11,000 men, divided into five divisions of about 1,800 men each, with Maxwell's corps of riflemen of about 300 men, together with 1,500 militia under General Armstrong, commanded respectively by Generals Stirling, Stevens, Sullivan, Greene and Wayne, had been slowly falling back before the British.

The Brandywine is a considerable stream, capable of being forded at many places. Within the distance of nine miles it is crossed at the following places:

Pyle's Ford, two miles below Chadd's Ford, where Washington made his stand; Brinton's Ford, two miles above; then Jones' Ford, a mile above, now called Painter's Bridge; Wister's Ford, now called Lenape; more than a mile above that, Buffington's Ford, now called Shaw's Bridge, and Jefferis' Ford, about a mile above the last named ford.

The troops of Wayne, Stirling and Stevens were stationed back of and above Chadd's Ford. The division of Sullivan extended up to Brinton's Ford, Greene was held in reserve, while the militia were at Pyle's Ford.

Colonel Hazen with two regiments had been ordered to guard the fords above Brinton's Ford.

He placed a Delaware regiment at Painter's Bridge, half of his own regiment at the Lenape Ford, and the other half at Buffington's Ford. The British plan of battle provided that

the division of Cornwallis, which Howe personally accompanied, should make a wide detour, get in Washington's right and rear at Dilworthtown, thus cutting him off from Philadelphia, while Knyphausen should advance opposite Chadd's Ford with threatening demonstrations until such time as Cornwallis had reached Dilworthtown, which Knyphausen could determine by the sound of the cannon, when he should cross and with their combined attack crush Washington between them and drive him down the Delaware peninsula.

Cornwallis started at daybreak; Knyphausen at five o'clock. Knyphausen had seven miles to go; Cornwallis, sixteen. The morning was hot and foggy until eleven o'clock.

The head of Cornwallis column reached Scanneltown about three miles from the battlegrounds at Birmingham, a little after one o'clock, where they halted, that the rear of the column might come up.

Here they rested more than an hour and fed the horses and the men. In the meantime General Washington, who about two o'clock had learned of the approach of this flanking column, saw that he must deliver battle at Birmingham and not at Chadd's Ford as he had determined, and that he must hold the enemy in check at Birmingham, at all hazards, until his trains had been sufficiently advanced on the retreat towards Chester, and until the troops at Chadd's Ford should succeed in retreating beyond the line of Dilworthtown.

He accordingly threw all of his available force into the fight at Birmingham with the exception of Wayne, whom he held at Chadd's Ford to keep Knyphausen in check, and the militia at Pyle's Ford, two miles below.

General Knyphausen in his official report says he observed great commotion amongst the Americans at two o'clock.

He saw four batteries of artillery move from Washington's left to his right, and the trains begin to move hither and thither on the road towards Chester.

Washington immediately ordered Stirling and Stevens to Birmingham. At half past two he ordered Sullivan with his division to join Stirling and Stevens and take command.

Hazen, at Shaw's Bridge, at one o'clock saw the British crossing at Jefferis' Ford, one mile above and waiting until he could estimate their numbers, commenced a rapid and cautious

march down the Brandywine, taking up as he marched his detachments at Wister's Ford, and at Jones' Ford. Here he met General Sullivan, who had just come up from Brinton's Ford and was proceeding to march east on the Street road.

It is not probable that Hazen followed any road, but most likely marched through the woods along the creek. There was an old road from near Lenape or Wister's Ford, but it was much too close to the British.

When within probably half a mile of the point where the road from Sconceltown to Birmingham crosses the Street road, Sullivan's advance saw the British in the Street road about seven hundred feet ahead of them.

The British line of battle had been formed on the west side of the road from Sconceltown to Birmingham, a little north of the street road.

This line could not have been less than a quarter of a mile in length from left to right. As Sullivan was seven hundred feet west of the right of this line, we think it probable he must have been almost half a mile west of the road crossing before mentioned.

About the same time Sullivan saw the position held by Stirling and Stevens, which was about half a mile to his right and rear on an eminence.

In their reading of Sullivan's statement, the historians, who have written about the Battle of Brandywine, have all concluded that as soon as Sullivan saw the British he went right into the field and formed line of battle and they think he formed his line about where Parker Norris' house now stands.

In this conclusion they make no allowance for the length of the British line of battle west of the Birmingham road.

It is not likely that Sullivan made the extraordinary movement of turning the head of his column to the right and into the fields at the south at the point where he first saw the British ahead of him.

By such a movement he would expose his left flank and the rear of his entire column to the enemy as he turned into the field and they not more than seven hundred feet distant.

Is it not more probable that he about faced his whole column and after he had marched a safe distance away from the British, ordered them into the field on the south and marched

until he was in a line with the other two divisions at least a quarter of a mile south and west of where historians think he formed his line.

Thomas Sharpless, whose father lived on the ground of the battle, says his father told him that his father, the grandfather, told him that the American line was first formed on an eminence about a quarter of a mile southwest of where Harvey Darlington's spring house stands, a proper position on which to plant artillery and place infantry. It is almost in a line with Stirling and Stevens' position and distant almost half a mile.

Any one visiting the battle ground possessed of this information and reading Sullivan's report will see at a glance that this was undoubtedly the place where his line was formed.

Here he formed his line unfortunately with a gap of almost half a mile separating it from the other two divisions.

It is probable Sullivan thought this the best place to oppose the British advance until after he visited Stirling and Stevens, when he determined to move his troops to the right and join them.

Unfortunately just as he attempted to execute this movement the enemy commenced their attack upon him with his entire left flank exposed.

This his troops could not stand and they broke and went to the rear as many more experienced soldiers would have done and could not be again brought into action.

We will here give Sullivan's account of it in his own language. He says: "At half past two I received orders to march with my division to join with and take command of that and two others to oppose the enemy who were coming down on the right flank of our army. I neither knew where the enemy were nor what route the other two divisions were to take, and, of course, could not determine where I should form a junction with them.

"I began my march in a few minutes after I received my orders and had not marched a mile when I met Colonel Hazen and his regiment, who informed me that the enemy were close upon his heels. While I was conversing with Colonel Hazen, and our troops still on the march, the enemy headed us in the road about forty rods from our advanced guard this is about

700 feet. I then found it necessary to turn off to the right to form and so get nearer the other two divisions in the rear and to the right of the place I then was. I ordered Colonel Hazen's regiment to pass a hollow way, file off to the right and face to cover the artillery. The enemy seeing this did not press on, but gave me time to form my division on an advantageous height in a line with the other divisions, but almost half a mile to the left. I then rode on to consult the other general officers, who, upon receiving information that the enemy were endeavoring to outflank us on the right, were unanimously of the opinion that my division should be brought on to join the others, and that the whole should incline further to the right to prevent our being outflanked, but while my division was marching on and before it was possible for them to form to advantage the enemy pressed on with rapidity and attacked them, which threw them into some kind of confusion."

Sullivan became the object of much animadversion for his movements on that day. He was accused of making a long detour when he should have reached the desired point by a much shorter route across the fields.

He did not know where Stirling and Stevens were. He did not know where the British were until he saw them. We have no doubt the British column was as much surprised as Sullivan was when they suddenly confronted each other at these cross roads.

When the British saw Sullivan form his line with an interval of almost half a mile between him and the left of the line at Mrs. Biddle's hill, they probably thought this gap was to be filled by another approaching American column and hastened their attack.

The engagement at Mrs. Biddle's hill lasted an hour and forty minutes. The hill was taken and retaken five times and the ground from there to the Meeting House was covered with dead and wounded British.

The right of the line where Gen. Stevens' commanded held its position until about the time of the arrival of Gen. Greene.

He opened his ranks to permit Stevens' men to pass through and then closing up again, placing part of his men at a defile with Weedon's Brigade on his left and the balance of Muhlenberg's Brigade on his right, stubbornly confronted the enemy, until darkness set in.

According to the accounts of the British historians, it was with the greatest difficulty they could drive Stevens from his position and they state that when his men did retreat they united with a fresh body of Americans. Undoubtedly Greene's men took another strong position and held it until after dark.

Lient. McMichael, of Col. Stewart's Pennsylvania Regiment, of Greene's Division, states in his diary, that for twenty minutes the troops, where his regiment was, fought the British at the distance of fifty yards, and continually repulsed them until night set in.

Much speculation has been indulged in as to where this defile could be. There is but one defile between Birmingham and Dilworthtown. This is at Sandy Hollow where great numbers of the Americans were buried.

This defile is a very strong position. Two thousand men could at this day hold it against three times their numbers.

We think it is altogether probable this is the point where Gen. Greene so long held the British at bay.

The duty which devolved on Gen. Wayne on this occasion was of a most delicate nature. He was required to hold Gen. Knyphausen, who had 11,000 men with him, in check, such a length of time as would prevent him from getting in the rear of the Americans fighting at Birmingham, while he himself must needs leave the field before the British fighting at Birmingham should get in his rear and cut off his retreat.

His retreat appears to have been precipitated by a singular circumstance. The British and Hessian grenadiers and the light infantry made the attack on Sullivan and broke him while attempting to close the gap between himself and the troops on Mrs. Biddle's hill. They appear to have followed the flying troops until they became inextricably entangled in a thick woods from which they were unable to emerge. When they finally extricated themselves they were discovered by Wayne approaching his rear, while he was fighting Knyphausen, whereupon he was immediately compelled to retreat.

These British regiments continued until they reached Israel Gilpin's house, where Gen. Howe established his headquarters.

The student investigating the history of the Battle of Brandywine, as it is called, will observe in the lines we have marked out, that we have differed to some extent with those who have preceded us. We feel compelled to state that our

conclusions are the result of much thought, of traditions handed down by the contemporaneous families, combined with some military experience on the part of several members of the committee.

In dividing his army Sir William Howe committed one of the greatest military blunders, from the consequences of which he escaped by the merest accident. His troops were first worn out by their sixteen-mile march in the sweltering September sun and then went into battle beyond the aid of the supporting column of Knyphausen.

Had he been unsuccessful he would have been destroyed before the other column could have come to his assistance.

Had Sullivan reached the ground fifteen minutes earlier he would have been closed up with the other column, when the British attack commenced and the panic avoided. Had Greene also reached the ground where Stevens fought, half an hour sooner, we think the battle would have resulted in the complete overthrow of Lord Cornwallis' flanking column, ending in its total rout. This we are induced to think from the fact that for an hour and forty minutes the two divisions of Stirling and Stevens, aided by the three regiments from Sullivan's division, of Hazen, Ogden and Dayton, not composing in all more than 3,000 men, withstood this entire British column, consisting of 7,000 men, at Mrs. Biddle's hill, and from the further fact that when Gen. Greene arrived, his division, assisted by such of the broken column as rallied with them, not numbering in all more than 3,000 men, withstood the entire British column until dark.

In Hume's History of England, it is said: "This battle upset all previous conclusions. It had been claimed that the Americans could not stand before the King's troops in a fight in the open and upon equal conditions, but that this battle upset all of these conclusions.

"The Americans" says the historian, "met the British in about equal numbers, they fought them face to face in an engagement, which in all of its parts commenced at sunrise and did not terminate until darkness put an end to it, and while it left the British in possession of the field it left them in such a condition that they could not move from it until after the lapse of three days."

General Washington in this engagement manifested superior generalship. With but a moment for thought he transferred the great body of his ~~troops to a new field, without forgetting the necessities of the old.~~

He fought the flower of the British army until darkness set in and almost defeated it. He then returned to Chester and in a few days advanced to meet the British in Goshen.

We should remark that in this history of events we have confined ourselves almost exclusively to the battle extending from Birmingham to Dilworthtown. The fighting in Knyphausen's front simply consisted of a series of skirmishes of greater or less magnitude, while the great battle of the day was fought on the lines we have mentioned, all of which took place within that part of Birmingham township, which is in the present limits of Chester county, with a small part of it in Thornbury township, Chester county, and that to distinguish it from the skirmishing at Chadd's Ford it might well be called the Battle of Birmingham.

So great was the number of wounded the British surgeons could not give any attention to the Americans in their hands, and Sir William Howe was compelled to ask Gen. Washington to send him some of his surgeons to attend to them. Several Philadelphians volunteered for the performance of this humane duty, including Dr. Benjamin Rush, Dr. Leiper, Dr. Latimer, Dr. Willet and their assistants.

In this engagement our ancestors, indifferently armed, poorly clad, insufficiently fed, proved themselves the peers of the finest troops in the British Army, as they boldly held aloft the Stars and Stripes, the Battle Flag of Freedom, and we find much in them to emulate and praise, but nothing to condemn.

FRANCIS C. HOOTON,
L. G. McCAULEY,
CHAS. H. PENNYPACKER,
JOS. THOMPSON,
WM. WAYNE, JR.,
GILBERT COPE.,



University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1388
Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

W

DE

I

T
N

Gaylord
PAMPHLET BINDER
Syracuse, N. Y.
Stockton, Calif.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 001 156 408 5

Univers
Sout
Lib